

TAKING STOCK:
**SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH AND RIGHTS**
in CLIMATE
COMMITMENTS

AN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC REVIEW

Sexual and reproductive health and rights and rights-based approaches in national climate documents: **A review of Nationally Determined Contributions since 2020 in Asia and the Pacific**



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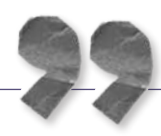
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FOREWORD



The climate crisis is one of the most fundamental challenges confronting humanity. Its impacts are already part of humankind's lived experience, reducing gains made towards sustainable development. Climate change is projected to double the number of people needing humanitarian assistance globally by 2050, with devastating impacts projected in Asia and the Pacific – the world's most disaster-prone region. Climate change is ravaging many communities in this region through the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as storms, floods, droughts and heatwaves. The region is also home to 22 of the world's 52 Small Island Developing States (SIDS), for which climate change represents an existential crisis.

The Asia-Pacific region already faces challenges in achieving the three transformative results of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Strategic Plan 2022–2025. The climate crisis exacerbates pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities and further undermines efforts to achieve the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 on good health and well-being, and SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment. For this reason, urgent measures are needed to deliver climate adaptation and resilience-building measures for communities on the frontlines of the crisis. The cost of inaction is that the most vulnerable, especially women and girls, will be further left behind.

In 2015, 196 countries adopted the Paris Agreement with the ambition of tackling climate change through voluntary national commitments, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). In the previous review of the NDCs submitted by signatories to the Paris Agreement, undertaken in partnership with Queen Mary University of London in 2021, selected countries from the region were reviewed. This second comprehensive review of the NDCs highlights the progress countries have made since the first NDCs, as well as current gaps and opportunities to strengthen national climate action, strategies and country-level programming that support women and young people in all their diversity.

Various countries in the Asia-Pacific region have highlighted the impacts of climate change on migration in their second NDCs. This requires enhanced capacity to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health and protection systems. This study is critical, shedding light on the crucial intersection between climate change and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices. It offers a platform for dialogue and action at regional, national and local levels. While SRHR is an underprioritized and neglected issue in most NDCs, including gender, youth and other at-risk groups, cross-cutting health interventions are essential entry points for strengthening SRHR in climate action.



It is worth noting that this is the only region where a mention of early marriage in relation to climate change was recorded. The review also highlights the urgent need to close the gap in national-level research to support targeted and evidence-based policymaking and to strengthen health and protection systems.

With the results of this review, we have more evidence to help countries establish synergies between their NDCs and national development plans. The findings will enable UNFPA to strengthen policy advocacy to support the right interventions at the right time to mitigate or adapt to the impacts of climate change. It will also help create space for the political engagement of communities, particularly women and young people of all backgrounds, to drive forward policies, laws and commitments for meaningful change and political action.

The findings will guide UNFPA in future efforts to support countries to ensure gender-transformative and rights-based climate action in the next cycle of NDC updates in 2025. The results will help shape our programmatic work at the country level to support countries in delivering on their commitments and proposed interventions where they already exist and help create new commitments currently lacking.

As we embark on the journey towards the 30th ICPD in 2024, UNFPA will increasingly integrate climate adaptation and resilience priorities into the ICPD Programme of Action. We will work to support countries not only in shaping the NDCs and building the capacity of critical national stakeholders, but also to ensure that other crucial national climate policies, such as a national adaptation plan (NAP) and a gender action plan (GAP), are developed. In doing so, we will robustly address the interlinkages between climate change, SRHR, GBV and harmful practices.

Supporting countries as they build resilient communities in an ever-changing climate must now become our urgent priority.

Pio Smith
Regional Director, UNFPA Asia and the Pacific

Abbreviations

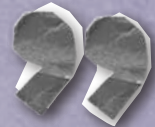
COP	Conference of the Parties
GAP	Gender action plan
GBV	Gender-based violence
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual and more
NAP	National adaptation plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGCCFP	National Gender and Climate Change Focal Point
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small Island Developing State
SOGIESC	Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund



The unprecedented emergencies of the climate crisis, pollution, desertification and biodiversity loss, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact of new and ongoing conflicts, have accelerated and intensified into widespread and interlinked crises that affect us all.

BUT NOT EQUALLY.

Everywhere, women and girls face the greatest threats and the deepest harm. Everywhere, women and girls are taking action to confront the climate and environmental crises. And everywhere, women and girls continue to be largely excluded from the rooms where decisions are taken.



ANTÓNIO GUTERRES,
UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL



INTRODUCTION



Climate change has lasting impacts on human health and disproportionately affects women and girls.

Women, girls and marginalized groups who are largely dependent on natural resources for livelihoods are among the hardest hit by extreme weather patterns. These weather patterns limit their access to food, water, shelter, education and access to essential health services, including those that address sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender-based violence (GBV) and preventing harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.

Emerging evidence shows the direct and indirect impacts of climate change on women, girls and marginalized groups and their SRHR as well as on GBV and harmful practices. A number of studies find that heat has an adverse impact on maternal and newborn health outcomes, increasing the risk of still-birth (Kuehn and McCormick, 2017; Rylander, Odland and Sandanger, 2013; Olson and Metz, 2020; Poursafa, Keikha and Kelishadi, 2015; Cil and Cameron, 2017; Pacheco, 2020; Yüzen and others, 2023). Additionally, increased poverty and food insecurity driven by climate-related loss of livelihoods are impacting maternal health (IPCC, 2014). Air pollution (Bekkar and others, 2020), climate-related diseases and food insecurity also have adverse impacts on maternal and neonatal health outcomes, which can be more severe for populations facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Climate-related emergencies cause major disruptions to access to health services and life-saving commodities, including contraception (IPAS, 2022). The challenge climate change poses around access to SRHR services will be keenly felt by those who already face discrimination and marginalization (e.g. women, adolescents and youth, LGBTQIA+, adolescents and youth, migrants, internally displaced persons, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and coastal and rural populations), and in areas where access to services may already be limited (e.g. humanitarian settings and areas affected by conflict).

The risks of GBV and child marriage are known to increase in times of stress and scarcity and following extreme weather events and disasters (McLeod, Barr and Rall, 2019; Pope and others, 2022), and climate change exacerbates the drivers of child marriage. GBV is a violation of human rights and has long-lasting impacts, including limiting women's ability to build resilience to climate change, which impedes the capacity of survivors and their dependents to proactively and positively respond to and manage ongoing challenges and crises (Le Masson and others, 2019). Additionally, climate-related loss or change of livelihoods, as well as displacement and migration, increase risks of GBV and harmful practices, including child marriage and female genital mutilation (Ahmed, Haq and Bartiaux, 2019; McLeod, Barr and Rall, 2019; Pope and others, 2022).

Failing to support the achievement of the full range of SRHR and prevention of GBV and harmful practices will hamper women's and girls' capacity to engage in climate action and policymaking and has direct implications for the achievement of human-centred sustainable development as outlined in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and reinforced by the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25. Gaps in the realization of SRHR can prevent women and girls from pursuing education, hinder livelihoods and reduce their ability to participate in household and community decision-making. Girls forced to marry before completing their education – and those denied access to education, literacy and public life – may experience limited ability to receive and act on climate information and alerts from disaster early warning systems. The realization of SRHR and the right to be free from violence, particularly for those already facing discrimination, can empower people to exercise

their agency and engage in climate action. For those affected by intersecting inequalities, realizing SRHR can allow marginalized groups' needs and priorities to be represented in climate action and policy processes.

The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report found that “the vulnerability of ecosystems and people to climate change differs substantially among and within regions [...] driven by patterns of intersecting socioeconomic development” and other structural inequalities (IPCC, 2022). These ongoing patterns of inequity are affecting women, girls and marginalized groups disproportionately. It also recognizes that the current efforts to reduce global emissions need to be accompanied by scaled-up adaptation actions that aim at strengthening resilience at the local, national and global levels to support women, girls and the most vulnerable groups from the inevitable impacts of climate change.





Recent reviews of the inclusion of SRHR and gender issues in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) documents, including a review conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) with Queen Mary University of London in 2021, identified significant gaps in national adaptation response and financing in critical sectors, such as health systems, protection systems and disaster risk reduction plans (McMullen and others, 2021). The report found that even where gender dimensions are incorporated and elaborated in the national climate documents, they lack clear adaptation actions and require resources as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure successful implementation. The review identified important gaps in the national climate policy integration of SRHR and GBV issues and in the identification of gender-transformative approaches that address the root causes of inequalities in various contexts.

Reviewing national climate policies, including the NDCs, and exploring and addressing gaps related to SRHR and GBV are critical to ensuring no one is left behind. It is essential to engage on SRHR and recognize that it includes some of the most stigmatized, deprioritized, yet fundamental dimensions of life, where we often see an acute concentration of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. If the climate crisis is a crisis of inequality, SRHR represents a key intersection in need of attention and investment. This is essential to building a better and more equal world.

UNFPA has committed to three transformative results by 2030: (1) ending preventable maternal deaths; (2) ending unmet need for family planning; and (3) ending GBV and harmful practices. The rapid pace of climate change over this decade will make each of these transformative results more difficult to achieve. UNFPA supports governments to ensure the incorporation of SRHR and GBV issues in the design of national climate policies and solutions, with women, young people and vulnerable groups at the heart of developing innovative solutions to improve climate resilience. This regional overview of references related to SRHR, GBV and harmful practices, health, gender, youth, human rights and population dynamics will provide an insight into the needs, priorities and gaps of the countries on SRHR in climate policies and supports cross-country learning. This knowledge supports greater inclusion, representation and action for disproportionately affected groups.





Photo: © UNFPA Maldives

The impacts of climate change in the Asia-Pacific region

The Asia-Pacific region is facing more severe impacts of climate change than other regions. Analysis of the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report shows that under all climate change scenarios, and in comparison to the global average, Asia and the Pacific will be most impacted by heavy precipitation, followed by agricultural drought, high temperatures and heat waves, and warming winds with intensifying tropical cyclones (IPCC, 2021). It is already the most disaster-prone region, containing six of the 10 nations most affected by extreme weather events globally (CRED, 2023). The Asia-Pacific region is also at significant risk of powerful earthquakes, which impact countries' abilities to respond to and prepare for the impacts of climate change. Over the past 20 years, the region has experienced

more than 320 earthquakes over 4.0 on the Richter scale, affecting more than 103 million people, causing more than 445,000 deaths and inflicting damages totalling more than US\$ 843 billion (Asian Development Bank, 2017; Asian Development Bank, 2019). Often, before communities can recover from a disaster caused by natural hazards, another one strikes, potentially reversing any progress made. The region had its warmest year on record in 2020, with the mean temperature 1.39°C above the average for 1981–2010 and unusually active summer monsoons (World Meteorological Organization, 2020). For Asia, the probability of being exposed to a lethal heatwave at least once in a decade, centred on 2050 projections, could increase to 80 per cent, impacting liveability and effective working hours in the region, with major economic impacts (McKinsey Global Institute, 2020). The region also experiences strong El Niño events.



The next El Niño–Southern Oscillation-related rainfall variability signal is expected by 2040, about three decades earlier than the previous expected year of 2070 (Ying and others, 2022). Exposure to frequent and severe weather events, rising sea levels and warming sea temperatures also affect communities' food and water sources and increase the risk of vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever (Hashim and Hashim, 2015).

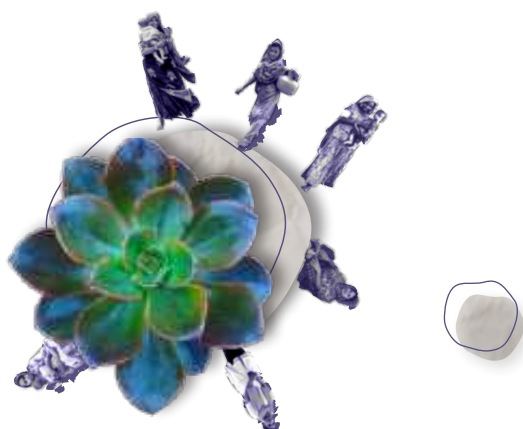
The Small Island Developing States (SIDS) comprise 52 countries and territories spread over the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans. They face unique social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities. Despite being responsible for only 0.2 per cent of global carbon emissions, they suffer most from the impacts of climate change. Increasingly frequent and severe natural hazards and slow-onset events such as sea level rise pose an existential threat to SIDS, where sea levels are rising four times faster than the global average (Asian Development Bank, 2017). Millions of families are at risk of displacement due to inundation of land from rising sea levels, requiring drastic and challenging measures such as relocation of populations.

The need for climate action is especially urgent as progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has slowed in Asia and the Pacific, especially those related to disaster and climate resilience. The main reason for the region's regression on SDG 13 on climate action is poor performance in emissions reduction. Massive investments are required to help mitigate climate change through scaling up support for renewable

energy, energy efficiency and sustainable transport and build adaptive resilience through sustainable urban development, resilient infrastructure, climate-smart agriculture and better preparedness for climate-related disasters.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence and harmful practices in Asia and the Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region has made substantial progress in SRHR over the past decades. Regarding maternal health, the region has seen a decline in the maternal mortality ratio by about half between 2000 and 2020 (WHO and others, 2023). However, the benefits and costs of rapid growth in the Asia-Pacific region have not been shared equitably, and striking gaps in health outcomes persist. In some cases, they have even widened in population groups across the region, with SRHR services and information being far from affordable and accessible to everyone. For example, the maternal mortality ratio ranges from 620 deaths per 100,000 live births in Afghanistan to 21 deaths per 100,000 live births in Malaysia in 2020 (WHO and others, 2023). The under-five mortality ratio ranges from as low as seven deaths per 1,000 live births in Maldives (World Bank Group, 2022) to as high as 50.8 in Myanmar and 63.9 in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (ASEAN, 2018). Across the Asia-Pacific region, in rural and remote areas with limited infrastructure, infant and maternal mortality ratios are higher, and girls are more likely to be at increased risk of unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, GBV and harmful practices such as early marriage (UNFPA, UNESCO and WHO, 2015). Within countries, poor women are at greater risk of dying from unintended pregnancies than wealthier women (Sciortino, 2020).





The Asia-Pacific region has made significant strides in reducing the unmet need for family planning, but there are substantial differences across countries. The prevalence rate of modern contraceptive methods is as high as 62.3 per cent in high-income countries and 60.4 per cent in upper-middle-income countries. However, the average prevalence in lower-middle- and low-income countries and territories is only 45.2 per cent. In countries like Papua New Guinea, Pakistan and Solomon Islands, fewer than one in three married or in-union women use any method (OECD and WHO, 2020). Hence, 140 million women in the region still have unmet family planning needs (UNFPA, 2022a). Adolescent birth rates have declined globally, and in the Asia-Pacific region the adolescent fertility rate has dropped significantly in recent decades. However, adolescent fertility remains high in some countries in the region, such as Bangladesh, which has 82 births per 1,000 women aged 15–19 (OECD and WHO, 2020). Up to 63 per cent of adolescent pregnancies in the region are unintended, contributing to a significant, although under-reported, burden of unsafe abortions (UNFPA, UNESCO and WHO, 2015), demonstrating the growing need to increase access to SRHR information and services for adolescents and youth, with SRHR service coverage for adolescents lagging behind the general trend of improved service coverage in the region.

Ending GBV and harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child marriage, is the third transformative result of the UNFPA Strategic Plan. There is significant variation within the Asia-Pacific region in the proportion of women who report having experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime, ranging from 15 per cent in Bhutan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Philippines to 64 per cent in Fiji and Solomon Islands (UNFPA, 2022b). In a region where

more than a third of girls get married before their eighteenth birthday (UNESCAP, 2013), 44 per cent of all child brides globally are from South Asia, and 12 per cent are from East Asia and the Pacific. The region is not on track to meet the SDG target of eliminating this harmful practice by 2030 (UNICEF, 2018).

Climate action and the Nationally Determined Contributions

In 2016, 196 countries adopted the Paris Agreement, a legally binding agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that sets a target of keeping the rise in global temperature in the twenty-first century below 2°C and to pursue efforts to limit it further to 1.5°C. As signatories, each country is required to prepare, communicate and maintain NDCs. Submitted every five years, NDCs are a key national climate policy document and include a description of how a country will work to mitigate and adapt to climate change in their territory. They lay out actions to address climate challenges at the national level and usually include sections on actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change through emission reduction as well as chapters on how to strengthen the resilience to climate change of individuals, communities or systems through adaptation actions. In 2020 and 2021, countries submitted the second round of NDCs showing progress from earlier NDCs, reflecting the highest possible ambition for each country, and including plans for monitoring and evaluation. Another round of NDC submissions will take place in 2025. As NDCs are required by all nations who are signatories to the Paris Agreement, they provide an opportunity to gain an overview of climate plans and challenges in each territory and an indication of levels of ambition over time. They also allow for cross-country and regional comparison.



METHODOLOGY



This report relays the findings of an analysis of the inclusion of SRHR and related thematic areas in NDCs from the Asia-Pacific region published in and after 2020.

It adopts the broad definition of SRHR set out in the Guttmacher-*Lancet* report of 2018 (Guttmacher-*Lancet* Commission, 2018), which describes SRHR as a set of rights and essential services that meet public health and human rights standards. This package includes GBV. The review accounted for any references to SRHR and GBV and harmful practices, but also explored five other SRHR-related thematic areas: (1) health; (2) gender; (3) human rights, participation and vulnerable groups; (4) youth; and (5) population dynamics. These thematic areas may serve as important entry points for strengthening SRHR in climate action and achieving rights-based and gender-transformative change. These five related thematic areas were included in this review as they intersect with women's health and rights issues by nature of their definition and content and are relevant to addressing the unequal and disproportionate impacts of climate change on particular groups.

The research team reviewed references to **health** as health is core to SRHR and a component of the well-being of women and girls as it relates to their experience of violence, and because unequal access to and achievement of good health are also issues of justice and inequality. We reviewed references to **gender** as gender-mainstreaming and participation

are key in achieving gender equality and access to SRHR services, including access to services for people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). In addition, we analysed any reference or considerations for **human rights**, as the realization of SRHR and the right to be free from violence requires human rights-based approaches, which means that all forms of discrimination must be prohibited, prevented and eliminated. In this context, we also reviewed to what extent vulnerable groups were acknowledged or included in the NDCs. We reviewed any references to participation, empowerment and meaningful inclusion of **youth** due to their critical role as agents of change for SRHR in climate action. Finally, we included any references to **population dynamics** such as population size, migration and urbanization and assessed if these were presented in alignment with the human rights-based principles set out in the ICPD Programme of Action.

This systematic process of content analysis of SRHR and GBV and harmful practices and the five thematic areas was performed for each NDC, using the method developed for the review of 50 NDCs submitted before 2020 (McMullen and others, 2021). The content analysis was conducted in three stages.



In the first stage, references to all five thematic areas were gathered from each NDC into a spreadsheet. In the second stage, content specific to thematic areas was grouped together to identify the range of concerns or ambitions identified across countries in relation to the theme, i.e. health or gender. Finally, a country and cross-country analysis was undertaken to identify gaps and good practices in the NDCs in relation to each thematic area.

The content analysis focused on the extent to which the thematic areas were included in the NDC report. References to the thematic areas in the analysis may appear as part of a contextual aspect in the country's situational analysis, the acknowledgement of the impacts of climate change on that specific dimension or the provision of a policy or intervention response.

The UNFPA Asia and the Pacific region comprises 36 countries; however, only 25 were reviewed as 11 did not have an NDC or update published in and after 2020 or submitted an NDC after completion of the analysis. A small number of NDCs reviewed were insubstantial and referred to the previous version of the NDC for key sections such as adaptation or mitigation measures. In these cases, the previous NDC was also reviewed to ensure completeness. See appendix 1 for a full list of countries and versions of NDCs included for review.

To ensure the inclusion of perspectives from young people, UNFPA selected six young people who were members of either the UNFPA Joint Youth Working Group on SRHR and Climate Change or YOUNGO (the youth constituency to UNFCCC) and were experienced in the NDC or similar development processes. The young people selected are based in the five regions where UNFPA works. The young person from Asia and the Pacific produced a short report providing their perspective on the NDCs and the climate

crisis in their region as well as a reflection on how climate change impacts SRHR. These perspectives are presented in the Youth Report section of this publication (see pages 29–31).

The results of this report will provide an opening for dialogue at regional, national and local levels in the Asia-Pacific region on the ways that climate change and SRHR and GBV intersect and identify entry points for climate action, highlighting gaps as well as opportunities and best practices to allow for greater and more meaningful inclusion of aspects of SRHR and GBV in climate policy. This includes identifying and focusing on region-specific entry points in national climate actions to ensure no one is left behind and address underlying patterns of vulnerability and inequalities.

Limitations

NDCs relay a nation's priority actions in responding to climate change and are limited in their ability to unpack specific sectoral actions. Related national climate policy documents will contain more detailed action related to the thematic areas described in this report. Readers are encouraged to keep this in mind when reading the report. Not all countries have submitted an NDC since 2020. For those countries that submitted their first NDC before 2020, an updated NDC was included in the analysis. As we included only the most recent NDC submitted in and after 2020, it is possible that some information included in the first NDC may not have been relayed into the updated, second or interim NDC, and therefore have not been included in the analysis. Furthermore, many other documents relevant to SRHR and GBV were not included in the analysis, such as other national climate policies or gender action plans (GAPs), which were commonly referenced in NDCs, and therefore our analysis is limited to the information included in the NDC.





KEY FINDINGS BY THEMATIC AREA

The climate emergency imperils progress towards all our global goals, including achieving sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. Shifting temperatures and other climate consequences may lead to pregnancy losses or low birth weight. Natural disasters often disrupt provision of contraceptive services, which can lead to an increase in unintended pregnancies. Climate-induced disasters can also upend programmes to respond to gender-based violence, and where people are displaced, child marriages and other harmful practices also tend to rise.

DR. NATALIA KANEM,
UNFPA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence and harmful practices

The review of the 25 NDCs shows that seven include issues related to SRHR, GBV and harmful practices (see figure 1). Specifically, there are seven references to SRHR, three to GBV and one to harmful practices. Seven of the SRHR references concern maternal and newborn health, and two concern the importance of SRHR information, education and awareness. The quality and detail of these references are highly variable. While some references provide specific key indicators for SRHR, GBV and harmful practices in adaptation measures, others mention them only in broad terms in adaptation plans. In

addition, some simply describe the current state of SRHR, GBV and harmful practices in the country or explain the negative impacts of climate change on GBV.

Maternal and newborn health

Maternal and newborn health is the most commonly described aspect of SRHR in NDCs, with countries including references to pregnancy, breastfeeding and maternal and infant mortality. Sri Lanka and Nepal both briefly reference maternal mortality. Sri Lanka states that it met Millenium Development Goal targets for maternal mortality and reproductive health and describes the current infant and maternal mortality rates (Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 43). Nepal describes declining rates of maternal mortality (Nepal NDC, 2020: p. 11).

FIGURE 1: Number of Nationally Determined Contributions that integrate sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender-based violence issues out of the 25 Nationally Determined Contributions reviewed

7

integrate sexual and reproductive health and rights

out of

25

total Nationally Determined Contributions



Photo: © UNFPA Malaysia

Cambodia describes how climate-related food crises lead to additional time spent sourcing water or pasture, which can, in turn, influence time available for exclusive breastfeeding, and that increased workloads and climate change-related stress during pregnancy could contribute to low birth weight (Cambodia NDC, 2021: p. 30–31). Viet Nam describes the negative impacts of climate change on women’s health, including the increased prevalence of diseases and epidemics, especially among pregnant women (Viet Nam NDC, 2020: p. 14).

Alongside linking climate change with worsening SRHR, Sri Lanka includes adaptation measures to build the resilience of vulnerable groups. Its NDC highlights how pregnant women with low body mass index on or before 12 weeks of pregnancy, low birthweight of newborns, underweight infants and young children aged up to one year are major concerns in the health sector that will be challenging to deal with as “food security becomes vulnerable to climate change” (Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 43). In response,

the NDC includes an adaptation measure to strengthen social welfare systems to cover groups, including nursing mothers and young children, who are vulnerable to food insecurity (Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 44).

Papua New Guinea and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic go beyond describing the impacts of climate change on SRHR to provide key indicators for SRHR within adaptation measures. Papua New Guinea describes how malaria is one of the top five health priorities for the country as the impacts of the infection are worsening with rising temperatures. Its NDC includes a health sector adaptation to maintain high coverage of long-lasting insecticide nets with an indicator that “by 2025, at least 85 per cent of people/ pregnant women/children <5 slept under long-lasting insecticide nets the previous night” (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 49).

Other references to sexual and reproductive health and rights

The Marshall Islands includes SRHR broadly in the adaptation section for gender and human rights (see table 1), with a headline recommendation to “ensure programs and projects contribute to secure family well-being including healthy lives and livelihoods, through education, domestic partnerships, family and household responsibilities, sexual and reproductive health” (the Marshall Islands NDC, 2018: p. 57). The Lao People’s Democratic Republic is the only country to reference SRHR awareness, and provides a key indicator within the health adaptation strategy for “20 sensitive communities informed on water, sanitation, hygiene, dengue control, nutrition, women health, reproductive and children health” (the Lao People’s Democratic Republic NDC, 2020: p. 23).



TABLE 1: Key references to sexual and reproductive health and rights in Nationally Determined Contributions in Asia and the Pacific	
Cambodia	“The negative impacts on agricultural production can lead to breakdown of food systems, and vulnerable groups risk further deterioration into food and nutrition crises if exposed to extreme climate events. Adaptation strategies, for example additional time in sourcing water or pasture, can particularly affect women labour allocation, in turn influencing time available for childcare and feeding (e.g. breastfeeding exclusively, preparing healthy meals). Further strain on the workload of women and climate change-related stress during pregnancy could contribute to low birth weight, leading to increases in risks of undernutrition and non-communicable diseases.” (p. 31)
Lao People’s Democratic Republic (the)	“20 sensitive communities informed on water, sanitation, hygiene, dengue control, nutrition, women health, reproductive and children health.” (p. 23)
Marshall Islands (the)	“Ensure programs and projects contribute to secure family wellbeing including healthy lives and livelihoods, through education, domestic partnerships, family and household responsibilities, sexual and reproductive health.” (2018: p. 57)
Nepal	“Rates of child and maternal mortality reduced significantly as well.” (p. 11)
Papua New Guinea	“Indicator: By 2025, at least 85% of [people/children <5/pregnant women] who slept under a long-lasting insecticidal net the previous night.” (p. 49)
Sri Lanka	<p>“Sri Lanka performed well in its efforts to attain the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the targets set for 2015 for child mortality, maternal mortality, reproductive health, and eradication of malaria were successfully met with a well-established healthcare system. Infant mortality is 7 per 100 live births, maternal mortality is 35 per 100,000 live births. However, malnutrition among children and women is inexplicably high in Sri Lanka and vector-borne diseases like dengue and leptospirosis claim many lives annually. Major concerns include pregnant women with low BMI [body mass index] on or before 12 weeks of pregnancy (15%), low birth weight of newborns (nearly 12%), underweight infants (6.4%), young children aged 1–2 (12%), aged 2–5 (19%) can be highlighted.” (p. 43)</p> <p>“Social welfare systems strengthened to cover vulnerable groups including families below the poverty line, elderly, disabled people, nursing mothers and young children in Medical Officer of Health (MOH) areas identified as vulnerable to food insecurity.” (p. 44)</p>
Viet Nam	“Several negative impacts of climate change on women’s health include increased prevalence of diseases and epidemics, especially among pregnant women, girls, women with chronic diseases and elderly women.” (p. 14)

Gender-based violence

GBV references were scarce across the 25 NDCs reviewed (see table 2). Only three countries made references to GBV, where the references are simple descriptions of the current state of GBV or a description of the negative impacts of climate change on GBV. GBV is also described as a climate-related gender and rights challenge in the NDCs. Cambodia describes how, “by exaggerating gender inequality, climate change also reinforces a structural root cause of violence against women and girls” (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 40).

Viet Nam states that family livelihood pressures from climate-related stresses increase the risk of domestic violence and violence towards children (Viet Nam NDC, 2020: p. 14). The Marshall Islands provides a headline recommendation from its second NDC to eliminate GBV and increase the protection and care of survivors (the Marshall Islands NDC, 2018: pp. 57, 59).



Photo: © UNFPA/Shehzad Noorani



TABLE 2:
All references to gender-based violence in Nationally Determined Contributions in Asia and the Pacific

Cambodia	"Climate change affects gender minorities disproportionately, including women and girls. The areas where women play a central role – food security, nutrition, energy, livelihoods, health, natural resource management, among others – are those most directly impacted by climate change. By exaggerating gender inequality, climate change also reinforces a structural root cause of violence against women and girls." (p. 40)
Marshall Islands (the)	"Eliminate gender-based violence and increase protection and care of survivors." (2018: p. 57)
Viet Nam	"Family livelihood pressure increases the risk of domestic violence and violence towards children." (p. 15)

Harmful practices

Early child marriage is referenced once among the 25 NDCs analysed. Viet Nam (see box 1) describes how climate change can increase the risk of early marriage as a way to reduce economic burdens for families (Viet Nam NDC, 2020: p. 14).

Photo: © UNFPA Viet Nam



BOX 1:

The Nationally Determined Contribution of Viet Nam references the harmful practice of child marriage

"Climate change may also lead to a higher risk of early marriage as a means of reducing economic burdens for families." (p. 15)

Health

FIGURE 2: Number of Nationally Determined Contributions that integrate health issues out of the 25 Nationally Determined Contributions reviewed



Overall, the health references are the most extensive and detailed of any thematic areas analysed, with every NDC containing some reference to health (see figure 2). Four SIDS – Maldives, Solomon Islands, Nauru and the Marshall Islands – refer to climate change as an existential threat, usually due to sea level rise. Solomon Islands refers to adaptation “not as an option – but rather a matter of survival” (Solomon Islands NDC, 2021: p. 16), while Nauru describes how sea level rise and other adverse impacts of climate change “represent the gravest of threats to their survival and viability” (Nauru NDC, 2021: p. 13).

Eight countries describe increases in mortality from climate change. This is most commonly in reference to extreme weather events such as tsunamis, cyclones and heatwaves.

However, Myanmar describes mortality from air pollution (Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 31), and Solomon Islands predicts that “between 2030 and 2050 climate change will cause an additional 250,000 deaths from malnutrition, malaria, heat stress and other diseases such as COVID-19” (Solomon Islands NDC, 2021: p. 21). Sri Lanka is the only country to include an adaptation measure related to the reduction of mortality from extreme weather events through four actions: risk assessments, health preparedness, early warning systems and public awareness (Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 44).

All the NDCs analysed mention extreme weather events and/or disasters more generally. Many countries describe extreme weather events as becoming more intense and frequent due to climate change.





Examples include tropical storms in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao People's Democratic Republic NDC, 2021: p. 9), cyclones in Myanmar (Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 44) and heatwaves in Pakistan (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 23). Maldives links disasters to increasing health risks, such as poor water quality and disruption in access to health services, which are known to disproportionately impact women and children (Maldives NDC, 2020: p. 14; see box 2).

Although most countries include disaster risk reduction and management strategies as important health-related adaptation measures, only a minority describe specific initiatives to reduce the impacts of extreme weather events, such as palm tree planting to reduce the risk of death due to lightning and the Coastal Embankment Project to mitigate the effects of cyclones and flooding in Bangladesh (Bangladesh NDC, 2021: pp. 16, 20), the latter of which notably includes a budget line with an estimated cost and identified financial source. Samoa and Sri Lanka both describe adaptation measures to protect communities against coastal flooding and landslides through mangrove forest expansion (Samoa NDC, 2021: p. 12; Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 21). Sri Lanka also describes plans to increase forestry to support resilience to drought (Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 21).

Most countries (23) recognize health as a vulnerable sector, and 16 countries reference health surveillance and monitoring as an important tool to address this vulnerability. These most commonly referred to the use and development of early warning systems in monitoring weather patterns for disaster risk reduction and, to a lesser degree, monitoring climate-related diseases. Myanmar describes different tools used to trigger timely precautions to the target community, such as audio-video forecasting, SMS and smartphone-based applications (Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 78), while Papua New Guinea includes a key target of 6 million people (70 per cent of the population) to benefit from improved early warning information to respond to climate extremes by 2030 (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 51). Cambodia's NDC provides a comprehensive description and means that cross-cuts several of the thematic areas for its adaptation action to "enable effective decision-making for health interventions through the generation of information and improved surveillance or early warning systems". The priority actions are to train health-care providers on reporting and data surveillance (estimated to cost US\$ 113,519), assess current technologies available to aid surveillance, and gender and youth consideration, including targets for female participation and a risk assessment to understand the disproportionate impacts of dengue on women (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 116).

The Nationally Determined Contribution of Maldives describes disruption to health services from natural disasters

BOX 2:

"Climate change has both direct and indirect health impacts. Warmer temperatures and wetter monsoon seasons could increase the prevalence of vector borne diseases. Extreme weather such as storm surges and flooding cause significant damage to health care facilities and the delivery of health services during emergencies. These impacts are not limited to physical diseases, but also affects mental and social well being. This often has a disproportionate burden on women, elderly persons, persons with disabilities and children." (p. 14)



Photo: © UNFPA/Shehzad Noorani

The majority of NDCs (22) reference climate-related diseases and 13 NDCs mention vector-borne diseases. Cambodia describes how rising temperatures and heavy rainfall increase the risk of vector-borne diseases by affecting their reproduction, season and geographic distribution (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 32). Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka describe how rising temperatures have led to the migration of vector-borne diseases such as malaria to higher altitudes. This poses an extra risk as local communities have no immunity to malaria (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 23; Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 46).

The increasing risk of other diseases such as dengue fever, yellow fever, typhoid and diarrhoeal and respiratory diseases are also described to a lesser degree (Tonga NDC, 2020: p. 30; Viet Nam NDC, 2020: p. 14). Myanmar describes its liquefied petroleum gas programme, which has a target to reach 1 million households. It aims to reduce health impacts, such as respiratory diseases and eye diseases associated with inefficient fuelwood combustion. The programme has many co-benefits, such as reduced emissions and reduced time spent collecting fuelwood and cooking (Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 25).





Child health is another theme that emerges from our analysis. Nepal and Sri Lanka both describe child mortality rates (Nepal NDC, 2020: p. 11; Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 43), and Pakistan includes measures to improve child mortality rates and associated women's health issues alongside an indicator of the number of measures adopted (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 50). Papua New Guinea also provides specific indicators for health adaptation measures in the form of the proportion of children under five sleeping under long-lasting insecticidal nets and who received antimalarial drugs for fever (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 49).

The majority of NDCs make some reference to food security (21) and water security (20) as health-related concerns. Most countries note the myriad ways in which climate change will have negative impacts on food and water quality, access and cost, such as deteriorating water quality from flooding and drought, interruptions of food imports and increased prices of healthy food (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 23; Nauru NDC, 2021: p. 23). Food insecurity was also frequently linked to negative impacts on nutritional status. In Pakistan, for example, food insecurity results in "decreased protein, zinc, iron and quality of protein in crops", causing malnutrition and stunting (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 22). Strategies to increase food and water security were commonly included as adaptation pillars, with some countries employing schemes such as the "Recharge" programme in Pakistan, which uses floodwater to restore wetland ecosystems and recharge aquifers to benefit 10 million food- and water-vulnerable people (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 40).

COVID-19 featured prominently in 18 NDCs. Some countries explicitly describe how the pandemic has negatively impacted the health and financial state of the country, such as Samoa, which expects poverty rates to increase (Samoa NDC, 2021: p. 8), and Solomon Islands, which describes the need to delay and/or divert funding away

from renewable energy and climate change adaptation (Solomon Islands NDC, 2021: p. 21). Some countries used COVID-19 as an opportunity to prioritize climate and environmentally-friendly infrastructure investments, such as the Myanmar forestry plan (Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 19) and the Ten Billion Trees Tsunami Programme in Pakistan, which employed 84,609 daily workers to plant 430 million trees during 2020 (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 43).



Photo: © UNFPA Afghanistan



Photo: © UNFPA Maldives





Gender

Gender features prominently in the NDCs, being referenced by 24 countries (see figure 3). However, the details of these references are highly varied. Some NDCs provide specific examples, actions or policies with gender at the forefront, while others simply mention gender as an area of importance.

Women's heightened vulnerability to the impacts of climate change is recognized in 13 NDCs. These references are almost exclusively statements on the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women. However, there are varying reasons provided for this vulnerability, such as lack of access to land (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 10), limited income, education and employment

opportunities, and limited decision-making power (Viet Nam NDC, 2020: p. 13; see box 3), and women's marginalized status (the Marshall Islands NDC, 2018: p. 41; Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 85). Many countries acknowledge that the vulnerability of women also arises from their central role in areas that are the most directly impacted by climate change, such as agriculture, health, food security, energy and natural resource management. For example, Papua New Guinea describes how women experience energy poverty differently to men due to increased distance travelled to collect biomass, safety concerns when travelling long distances, reliance on food that requires short or no cooking time and indoor air pollution (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 32).

FIGURE 3: Number of Nationally Determined Contributions that integrate gender issues out of the 25 Nationally Determined Contributions reviewed

25
integrate gender
out of **25**
total Nationally
Determined Contributions



The most common reference to gender concerns gender-mainstreaming and/or responsiveness (17), which is widely included in NDC development and implementation. However, this is not captured further in many countries' adaptation measures, targets or policy initiatives. A minority of countries go beyond this broad term and include details on methods to ensure gender mainstreaming. Bhutan describes a study on gender and climate change that unpacked the gender-climate nexus, gender roles and gender-differentiated impacts of climate change, which was instrumental in informing gender-mainstreaming opportunities in the preparation of the NDC (Bhutan NDC, 2021: p. 3). Cambodia includes targets for gender participation in all mitigation and adaptation policies (Cambodia NDC, 2020: pp. 90–134).

Thirteen countries reference gender in relation to health, with gender in disaster response a common theme. It is one of the only areas where there are examples and measures of gender mainstreaming

that go beyond the inclusion of the term. Many countries highlight the importance of collecting, reporting and analysing gender-disaggregated data to identify gaps, needs and opportunities for men, women, youth and marginalized groups to improve gender and social inequities. Cambodia notes that the collection of gender-disaggregated data is poor, and information on the differentiated impacts of disasters on women, older persons, children, persons with disabilities and other socially marginalized groups is mainly anecdotal (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 43). Both Cambodia and Pakistan aim to prioritize gender-disaggregated data collection in disasters (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 42; Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 58). Cambodia also suggests the creation of a gender and disaster vulnerability atlas (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 125), while Pakistan describes measures to lessen women's vulnerability to disasters by targeting income-generating activities for women before and after disasters, measured by the number of women earning income (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 57).

**BOX 3:****The Nationally Determined Contribution of Viet Nam describing women's vulnerability to climate change**

"Climate change, increased natural disasters and climate extremes produce different impacts on women and men. While men are exposed to more risks due to their involvement in search and rescue operations, women are generally more vulnerable to health and socio-economic problems. Several negative impacts of climate change on women's health include increased prevalence of diseases and epidemics, especially among pregnant women, girls, women with chronic diseases and elderly women. Regarding the socio-economic aspect, as female farmers usually have lower levels of education and less access to information and finance than men, their livelihoods depend mainly on natural resources and have high sensitivity but low adaptive capacity in the context of climate change. This is problematic especially in cases where females are heads of households. In addition, women in farming households usually have limited decision making power compared to men. They, therefore, may not be able to apply their experience and understanding in selecting varieties and cultivation techniques suitable for the climate change context in agricultural production." (p. 14)





Photo: © UNFPA Bangladesh/Ferdous Alka

Cambodia also includes actions to collect gender-disaggregated data to understand different impacts of air- and vector-borne diseases on women and men, as women “often carry the burden of household care including medical care for the family, but [...] also play an important role in championing behavioural patterns which may improve health and hygiene and reduce disease spread” (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 42). The Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea all reference women’s health more generally (the Lao People’s Democratic Republic NDC, 2021: p. 23; Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 50; Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 32).

Several NDCs highlight women as particularly vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change, with some countries such as Cambodia, Pakistan and Nepal describing actions to collect gender-disaggregated data to identify, highlight and create measures to address the disproportionate impacts (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 114; Pakistan NDC, 2020: p. 49; Nepal NDC, 2020: p. 8). Women in agriculture (11) and food and water security (6) are other common themes of gender references. Sri Lanka describes how women can be mobilized to improve food security and nutrition by using their knowledge of traditionally used but commercially ignored species (Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 27).



The Lao People's Democratic Republic includes indicators and targets for women provided with access to improved water and sanitation services (the Lao People's Democratic Republic NDC, 2021: p. 23).

Five NDCs reference women in relation to energy, commonly around the promotion of access to renewable energies and reducing reliance on firewood and charcoal for household energy. Cambodia comments that women are often responsible for household energy-related decisions in rural areas, and that women, the poor and the marginalized are often the last to gain energy access (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 41). Papua New Guinea describes how access to electricity or affordable renewable energies will improve the livelihoods of women and young people through decreased workloads, improved cooking, increased safety and security from reliable lighting, the ability to engage in home-based businesses and educational activities in the evenings and reduction of air pollution (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 11). Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Marshall Islands all describe ongoing or planned initiatives promoting low-carbon clean cookstoves (Bangladesh NDC, 2021: p. 16; the Marshall Islands NDC, 2018: p. 41; Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 56).

Increasing women's meaningful participation in climate decision-making and action is mentioned in 13 NDCs, with some countries providing targets and indicators for the minimum number and/or proportion of female participants, and eight countries reference capacity-building and empowerment of women.

Sri Lanka describes how gender-responsive training, promotion of entrepreneurial skills and access to technology and finance support women's participation (Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 27). Cambodia promotes the use of "women champions" to increase women's participation in all sectors (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 5). It further suggests that in sectors where women constitute a large portion of the informal workforce, such as recycling, garment manufacturing and waste management, the creation of formalized job opportunities could have a significant impact on stabilizing livelihoods for women (Cambodia NDC, 2020: pp. 41, 91).

Nine countries mention human rights and women's rights, sometimes with reference to the Paris Agreement, national laws and constitutions or land ownership (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 33). Four countries (Indonesia NDC, 2020: p. 10; Nauru NDC, 2021: p. 34; the Marshall Islands NDC, 2018: p. 58; Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 41) mention SDG 5 on gender equality.



Population dynamics, human mobility and urbanization

Nineteen of the NDCs reviewed reference population dynamics (see figure 4). Urbanization, migration and human displacement are referenced in 10 NDCs (see figure 5), with many countries describing migration due to climate change-related natural disasters and extreme weather events. Widespread

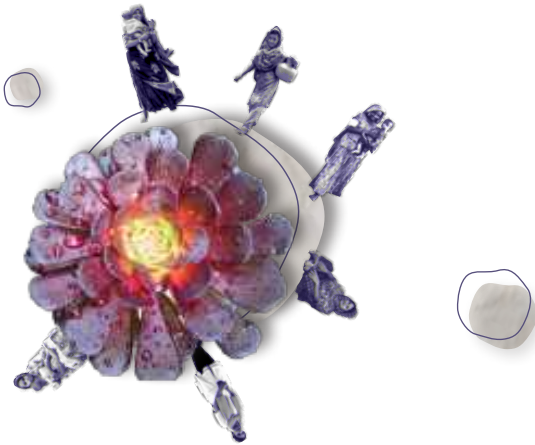
displacement due to flooding is mentioned in Papua New Guinea (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 21), due to cyclones in Myanmar (Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 77), due to drought in the Marshall Islands (the Marshall Islands NDC, 2018: p. 58) and due to rising sea levels in Fiji (Fiji NDC, 2020: p. 16; see box 4).

FIGURE 4: Number of Nationally Determined Contributions that integrate population dynamics issues out of the 25 Nationally Determined Contributions reviewed

19
include references to
population dynamics
out of **25**
total Nationally
Determined Contributions

FIGURE 5: Number of Nationally Determined Contributions that integrate migration and urbanization issues out of the 25 Nationally Determined Contributions reviewed

10
include references to migration,
urbanization and
human mobility
out of **25**
total Nationally
Determined Contributions



Four countries note that a large proportion of their population residing in coastal areas is highly vulnerable to rising sea levels (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 22; Samoa NDC, 2021: p. 7) and may consequently be forced to migrate away from coastal areas (Tonga NDC, 2020: p. 31; Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 41). Measures to aid and assist climate-induced migrants are included in the Pakistan NDC, which notes that livelihood opportunities should be provided to disaster-affected communities to manage forced migrations (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 57). Bangladesh describes an ongoing initiative that is implementing a shelter project for landless and homeless families

in areas with other mitigation initiatives such as tree planting and rainwater harvesting (Bangladesh NDC, 2021: p. 15).

Many NDCs reference urbanization. The key drivers of rural-to-urban migration include: access to employment; access to education; access to health-care services; access to tele-communications; access to clean water, sanitation and electricity in urban areas (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 22); and heightened vulnerability to extreme weather events in rural areas (Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 28). All of these are exacerbated by climate change. Sri Lanka and Myanmar describe the challenges of urban sprawl and unplanned settlements due to rural migrants, resulting in increased demand for services, increased congestion and disaster-related impacts, health risks, reduced access to clean water and sanitation, inappropriate and poor-quality housing, urban heat island impacts and low living standards of the urban poor (Sri Lanka NDC, 2021; p. 46). These consequences leave these areas more vulnerable to sudden and catastrophic climate-induced flooding and coastal storms (Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 40). A few countries include adaptation measures for developing climate-resilient cities, for example, through infrastructure development.

BOX 4:**The Nationally Determined Contribution of Fiji on migration and relocation of communities due to climate change**

“Even if global warming is limited to 1.5°C, vulnerable regions, including the Small Island Developing States, are projected to experience a multitude of interrelated climate risks, resulting in loss of livelihoods, food insecurity and large-scale population displacement. Fiji recognises this reality, as it lies on the front line of adverse climate change impacts and will be facing some of the most severe climate-related challenges in the coming decade. These range from prolonged droughts, changes in the hydrological cycle resulting in intense floods, and extreme weather events, to rising sea levels and its resultant saltwater intrusion and loss of habitable land. This has already led to partial and complete relocation of six climate vulnerable communities, with many more regions in the country being threatened by similar consequences.” (p. 16)

Youth

Thirteen NDCs describe youth being at heightened vulnerability to climate change due to their limited education and employment opportunities (see figure 6) (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 32), high exposure to extreme weather events (Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 77), vulnerability to food insecurity (Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 44) and marginalized status that limits their access, use and control over resources

and services (the Marshall Islands NDC, 2018: p. 58). Myanmar notes that education is one of the first expenditure cuts for households to cope with the impacts of economic or hazard stresses; hence, children are often the hardest hit and become more vulnerable if their access to education is restricted (Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 45). Viet Nam describes the negative impacts of climate-related disasters on children through increased risk of violence towards children and child marriage (Viet Nam NDC, 2020: p. 14; see box 5).

FIGURE 6: Number of Nationally Determined Contributions that integrate youth out of the 25 Nationally Determined Contributions reviewed

13

integrate youth issues

out of **25**

total Nationally
Determined Contributions

The Nationally Determined Contribution of Viet Nam describing the negative impacts of climate change on children

BOX 5:

“Climate change and disasters have a direct negative impact on the health of children, families and communities; increase problems and risks in child protection; negatively affect livelihoods of families, which force parents to leave their hometown to work in cities in many cases. As a result, many children may not receive proper care. In addition, family livelihood pressure increases the risk of domestic violence and violence towards children. Finally, in poor families, female-headed households, and households with children with disabilities and/or fatal diseases, negative impacts of climate change may force children to drop out of school in order to work to support their parents financially. Climate change may also lead to a higher risk of early marriage as a means of reducing economic burdens for families.” (p. 14)



Youth in relation to health featured prominently in 14 NDCs, most commonly referring to their vulnerability to the health impacts of climate change. Four countries reference child mortality (Viet Nam, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan). Papua New Guinea describes indicators for under-five-year-olds' access to antimalarials and long-lasting insecticidal nets (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 49), while Cambodia describes the potential for micronutrient deficiencies in children due to decreased forest cover (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 31). Viet Nam and Cambodia both describe children as particularly vulnerable to heatwaves from climate-related rising temperatures (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 32; Viet Nam NDC, 2020: p. 14).

The role of youth in disaster risk reduction is described in four NDCs. Fiji and Malaysia both refer to the inclusion and mainstreaming of youth in disaster risk reduction programmes (Fiji NDC, 2020: p. 20; Malaysia NDC, 2021: p. 12). Myanmar has created a Child Centred Risk Assessment tool as a decision-support tool for the government that ranks children's vulnerability to natural and human-caused hazards in the townships of Myanmar (Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 77). Cambodia describes the role that youth can play in promoting and sharing knowledge of early warning systems with their communities (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 44).

Eight countries reference youth participation in NDC development or climate action. Cambodia notes that youth play a critical role in developing and implementing climate actions across sectors, but must be engaged at all levels to participate meaningfully and be empowered to act as leaders of the next generation (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 44). Pakistan describes youth groups that were engaged in NDC consultative processes and have a role in undertaking adaptation and mitigation measures in their communities and neighbourhoods (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 59). Solomon Islands commits to building

the capacity of vulnerable groups by actively encouraging inclusive participation of women and youth (Solomon Islands NDC, 2021: p. 18).

Education and awareness of youth are described in 10 NDCs. The most common reference is to the inclusion of climate change in school curricula (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 37; Nauru NDC, 2021: p. 21; Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 44; Vanuatu NDC, 2021: p. 27). In some cases (9), NDCs refer to the rights of children as stated in the Paris Agreement (Indonesia NDC, 2020: p. 2; the Marshall Islands NDC, 2018: p. 69) and use this as a foundation for consideration of intergenerational inequities and inclusion of future generations in NDC development and implementation.

Other themes emerging from youth references were related to developing livelihood and employment opportunities. Cambodia notes the potential for youth livelihoods in the tourism sector, from working in ecotourism to promoting local organic products (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 44). Pakistan describes livelihoods in tree planting programmes (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 10), while Myanmar commits to building the capacities of younger farmers and informing them of licensing procedures for overseas export to enhance their socioeconomic resilience and discourage migration (Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 37).

Youth report: a youth perspective on the Nationally Determined Contributions

Around the world, young people are extremely worried about climate change, with 75 per cent of the world's youth population fearing the impacts of climate change on their lives, livelihoods and opportunities (Hurley, Dalglish and Sacks, 2022). Many young people report fears about forming families and having children due to the existential threats presented by the climate crisis (UNICEF, 2022).



Climate and health impacts will be most severely felt by marginalized children and adolescents, including Indigenous adolescents, refugees and adolescents with disabilities (UNICEF, 2022). Direct and indirect impacts on mental health are unequally distributed (WHO, 2022) and are expected to worsen in children and adolescents, particularly girls, with increasing temperatures (IPCC, 2022). Four million girls in low- and lower-middle-income countries will be prevented from completing their education because of climate-related events (Malala Fund, 2021). While young people face unique climate-related risks, they have been integral to bringing public attention to the crisis and leading the way in analysis, action and in demanding accountability.

A key component of the climate work of UNFPA is to empower adolescents and young people to build resilient communities, safeguard their well-being and protect their livelihoods.

For this review, UNFPA consulted with young people from the UNFPA Joint Youth Working Group on SRHR and Climate Change and YOUNGO. The aim of the consultation was to bring in young people's lived experiences from the region to capture youth perspectives on the NDCs and the climate crisis. Through analysis of five selected countries, youth reviewers presented their perspectives on progress towards, and recommendations for, better inclusion of SRHR, youth and gender in the NDCs.



Tasnia Ahmed, member, UNFPA Joint Youth Working Group on SRHR and Climate Change

The youth reviewer in the Asia-Pacific region is Tasnia Ahmed, a public health practitioner and climate activist who works at SERAC Bangladesh as a programme manager. She also works on the UNFPA Youth Task Force Committee on Population, SRHR and Climate Action. Ms. Ahmed is the team lead for Improving Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Dhaka Project, focusing on improving the sexual and reproductive health of urban women and adolescent girls. She is also a Women and Earth Initiative (WORTH) fellow on climate action and women's SRHR. Ms. Ahmed reviewed five countries in the Asia-Pacific region: Bangladesh, China, Nauru, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Findings

In the analysed countries, there is a gap in the inclusion of youth and women in the NDC development processes. Nauru, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Bangladesh significantly reference youth interventions and inclusion in climate action. These countries also integrate gender-responsive approaches or analysis in their NDC process or as part of their interventions.



China does not reference youth engagement or gender inclusion. It is important to consider that in a few of the countries reviewed, not enough has been done to create a youth-inclusive, climate-resilient health system. Notably, despite obvious and documented vulnerabilities in most countries, critical health interventions have not been considered in budget lines and none of the countries reviewed mention SRHR.



Photo: © Divisional Youth Forum/Jawad Hossain

Key quotes

“As a young woman in the region, I am worried by the fact that several of the revised NDCs omit women and youth. It is so frustrating to see the lack of recognition of the fact that young people can have a role in the implementation of climate policies and the development of the region aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.”

“I believe SRHR is perhaps the most underappreciated aspect of climate fragility. This has happened because youth are somehow denied access to reproductive health provision, as this has not been appropriately addressed in climate-affected areas. Additional challenges include

increasing child marriage, increasing rate of sexually transmitted infections, reproductive tract infections and HIV and gender-based violence.”

“The national public health consequences of climate change, particularly for the resilience of public health infrastructure, have been assessed by the country’s government and authorities. However, reproductive health has not been specifically mentioned. To increase the resilience of public health care infrastructure, proactive measures have been made to prepare for tropical illnesses, heat stress, dehydration and other climate change-driven public health consequences. Changes have been noted to treat vector-borne infections and other infectious diseases as well as adverse effects on water quality and access, including a rise in the frequency and intensity of floods and droughts.”

Taking action

1. Include the revised NDC goals in national development plans, in full consultation with young people, while integrating multidimensional, innovative and accessible approaches.
2. Build the capacity of stakeholders, especially young people, to develop specialized skills and technical know-how to promote mainstreaming of youth contributions and priorities throughout consultation and planning processes around the NDCs at the national level.
3. Facilitate access to women’s capacity-building and knowledge resources in response to requests for support on gender-mainstreaming in climate action. Promote and disseminate successes, effective practices and lessons from around the world through country peer exchanges and knowledge products as well as sharing empowering tales of women making a difference.

Leaving no one behind: human rights, participation and consideration of vulnerable groups

FIGURE 7: Number of Nationally Determined Contributions that integrate human rights, participation and consideration of vulnerable groups out of the 25 Nationally Determined Contributions reviewed



Twenty NDCs describe sections of their population as vulnerable (see figure 7), with women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons the most common, although other segments of society are included to varying degrees. Myanmar includes waste workers, low-income and marginalized communities as vulnerable due to exposure to pollutants (Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 41), while Papua New Guinea includes members of underprivileged or less advanced groups or residents of less advanced areas (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 24). Pakistan and Sri Lanka include people living in poverty as

particularly vulnerable due to their reliance on natural resources for their livelihood and their reduced ability to recover and resume livelihoods after climatic shocks due to a lack of safety nets and savings (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 22; Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 2). The Philippines includes a reference to NDC development through meaningful participation from all segments of society, including people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities; however, it provides no further details on the methods or means used for inclusion (the Philippines NDC 2021, p. 1).



Thirteen NDCs reference communities dependent on natural resources as vulnerable. For example, Maldives describes how changes in fish stocks and food due to climate change are “devastating to the fishing communities nutritionally” (Maldives NDC, 2020: p. 17).

Every NDC reviewed includes a reference to public participation in climate policy or action. The detail of the involvement and engagement varies widely; for some, this is a simple reference to an inclusive and participatory process, and for others, this is a more detailed description of which groups were involved at which stages. Participatory strategies for sustainable resource management are mentioned in 13 NDCs. These mentions include social forestry programmes

(Bangladesh NDC, 2021: p. 19; Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 40; Indonesia NDC, 2020: p. 31; the Lao People’s Democratic Republic NDC, 2021: p. 11; Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 51; Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 31; Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 32), marine fisheries (Fiji NDC, 2020: p. 19; Indonesia NDC, 2021: p. 31; Maldives NDC, 2020: p. 16; Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 37; Sri Lanka NDC, 2021: p. 32), coral reef restoration (Maldives NDC, 2020: p. 16), land-use restoration (Nauru NDC, 2021: p. 39), mangrove restoration (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 41; Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 39) and snow leopard habitat protection programmes (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 42). Nepal and Papua New Guinea describe female participation in sustainable forestry (Nepal NDC, 2020: p. 5; Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 32).

As discussed in the gender section, nine countries refer to human or civil rights. Myanmar states the rights of its citizens “to live in a healthy environment and a fair, equitable, and sustainable society, in particular the poorest and most vulnerable groups” (Myanmar NDC, 2021: p. 3). Both Papua New Guinea and the Marshall Islands commit to promoting a human rights-based approach in all related planning, programming and implementation (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 8; the Marshall Islands NDC, 2018: pp. 8, 59), with the latter proposing to support gender and human rights experts in advocacy, engagement and capacity-building and for enhancing gender in sector-specific elements.



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DISCUSSION



Sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence and harmful practices

This review of 25 NDCs from the Asia-Pacific region found that seven NDCs partially integrate SRHR and GBV. The references to SRHR are broad and cover many SRHR aspects, including maternal and neonatal health, breastfeeding, pregnancy and early child marriage. References to GBV are minimal and mainly describe how climate change impacts GBV.

The NDCs address SRHR issues in a variety of ways, with most NDCs acknowledging the impacts of climate change on SRHR, and the minority including adaptation measures to address these impacts with associated metrics for measuring progress. Examples of strong SRHR references include the Lao People's Democratic Republic, which highlights the importance of health information and awareness by including an intervention on climate-informed health programmes. This includes an indicator to inform at least 20 sensitive communities on water, sanitation, hygiene, dengue control, women's health and reproductive and child health, with progress to be monitored at least four times per year (the Lao People's Democratic Republic NDC, 2020: p. 23). With indicators and designated funding sources, Papua New Guinea demonstrates the importance of strengthening health systems in response to emerging climate-related diseases. The NDC includes an action to maintain high coverage of long-lasting insecticide-treated

nets, with an indicator that, by 2025, at least 85 per cent of pregnant women and children under five should have slept under a long-lasting insecticide-treated nets the previous night, with funding from the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Global Fund (Papua New Guinea NDC, 2020: p. 49).

Risks of GBV are known to increase during situations of stress and scarcity, often related to economic instability, food insecurity, unavailability of services and social protection networks and entrenched gender inequality (van Daalen and others, 2022). The impacts of climate change and weather-related disasters can also indirectly exacerbate the risks of GBV through climate-induced migration (Castañeda Casey and others, 2020). The impacts of climate change on GBV are reflected in the NDCs of Viet Nam and Cambodia, but these NDCs lack measures to address these increasing risks.

The NDCs reviewed reflect some of the wide-ranging impacts of climate change on SRHR and GBV. However, none of the NDCs describe past or planned actions to build national-level evidence on the impacts of climate change on SRHR, GBV and harmful practices, which is an essential step in developing tailored interventions. Collection of data disaggregated by age, sexual orientation, disability and migration status, as well as vulnerability assessments incorporating SRHR and GBV issues, could facilitate a better understanding of the gendered impacts of climate change. Investments in research to understand how GBV can be prevented in the climate crisis and the adaptations needed in GBV response services to better meet the needs of women and girls are crucial.



Health

Health was the most frequently discussed of all thematic areas and all NDCs integrate it to some degree. Disasters and/or extreme weather events were the most common health-related themes mentioned by all 25 NDCs. An example of a good practice is the NDC of Pakistan, which highlights the importance of strengthening evidence with a measure to increase knowledge of the linkages between climate change, gender, disasters and health (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 58). It also describes a measure to undertake programmes on income-generating activities for women during and after disasters, with an indicator of the number of women earning an income to measure progress (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 57).

Only a few NDCs articulate the need to strengthen health systems, and even fewer describe the need for a resilient health system to ensure continuity of maternal, reproductive, neonatal and child health services that are essential during crises. Cambodia provides an example of the importance of health systems strengthening with a measure to enhance climate resilience in health service delivery through the development of rural

water safety planning; water, sanitation and hygiene assessment tools for health-care facilities and communities; and the establishment of a technical working group for climate change on health, costing US\$ 246,748 (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 116). Furthermore, there are targets that 40 per cent of project beneficiaries of health services are female, at least 40 per cent are youth (age 15–35), and 50 per cent of women report increased access to water for themselves and their families as a result of project activities.

Our analysis reveals that health and gender represent strong entry points for SRHR and GBV in climate policy in the Asia-Pacific region. As a region highly vulnerable to natural disasters, climate policy offers an important opportunity for greater inclusion of SRHR and GBV to build resilience and adaptive capacity in the face of increasingly frequent and intense disasters. Disaster risk reduction represents a key area to integrate SRHR and GBV for both the immediate needs of access to emergency contraception and saving lives in obstetric complications to reduce the vulnerability of existing health systems to ensure they can absorb, respond to and recover from climate shocks.





Gender

The majority of NDCs reviewed (24) mention gender. However, only 13 specifically recognize women's and girls' disproportionate vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. There is considerable variation in how the documents articulate the specific interventions to address these gaps. Bhutan highlights the importance of strengthening the evidence base by conducting a study on gender and climate change to unpack the gender-climate nexus, gender roles and differentiated impacts of climate change. It uses this evidence to inform gender-mainstreaming opportunities in its NDC (Bhutan NDC, 2021: p. 3).

Cambodia provides an excellent example of gender mainstreaming throughout its NDC, with each mitigation and adaptation action set out within a template that includes columns for consideration of specific gender issues, including targets for participation, monitoring and evaluation actions (Cambodia NDC, 2020: pp. 90–134). For example, a measure for disaster risk reduction includes: (1) the implementation of community-based disaster and climate risk management programmes, with a target of 25 per cent female representation in Village Disaster Management Groups and Commune Committees for Disaster Management; (2) a 25 per cent increase of women in climate change community-based decision-making positions; and (3) the training of trainers of Women Champions

to ensure more female representation in disaster and climate risk management (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 126).

One of the gender and climate decisions of COP25 in December 2019 was the creation of the National Gender and Climate Change Focal Point (NGCCFP) (UNFCCC, 2019). In this review of NDCs in Asia and the Pacific, only Pakistan mentions the NGCCFP, possibly due to limited capacity and investment (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 55).

Population dynamics and human displacement

Twenty NDCs include references to population dynamics, which include population size, structure and movement. Ten NDCs describe urbanization, migration or human displacement, commonly in relation to the impacts of extreme weather events on increasing migration and human displacement. Many countries include adaptation measures to address the observed growing trends in climate migration. Migration is a highly gendered issue as women do not have the same access as men to assets and adaptation options to migrate (McOmer, 2020). This increases women's vulnerabilities, including the risk of GBV. This review found that while many NDCs address climate-related migration, only a few include measures to tackle future challenges and none of the NDCs present actions on gender and migration, including gender inclusion in resettlement and research activities. Interventions could be tailored to have a gender aspect, such as a Bangladesh shelter project that has the dual focus of providing temporary or permanent houses for landless, homeless or climate refugee families alongside tree plantations, rainwater harvesting and improved cookstoves, among other initiatives (Bangladesh NDC, 2021: p. 15).





Youth

Nearly all (22) NDCs integrate youth to some degree, with 14 references to youth concerning health, 13 recognizing the disproportionate impacts of climate change on youth, eight referencing youth participation and four including youth in disaster risk reduction. Overall, few NDCs describe youth in relation to policy and practice. Cambodia provides an example of youth participation in disasters as community volunteers in community-based disaster and climate risk management systems and in promoting and sharing early warning systems with at-risk community members (Cambodia NDC, 2020: p. 126). With such a high number

of youth references in relation to health, this represents an important entry point to guarantee adolescent and youth SRHR.

Youth participation in policymaking ensures the creation of youth-sensitive policies that are rights-based, holistic, multisectoral and inclusive. Young people should be engaged and empowered at all levels of climate processes to ensure youth mainstreaming in climate policy and action. Pakistan describes how youth can be effectively engaged in the NDC consultative process through a three-stage process: (1) a review of the 2016 NDC through a youth perspective; (2) a rapid survey of the relationship between climate change and youth; and (3) mapping civil society organizations working with youth groups (Pakistan NDC, 2021: p. 59).



Leaving no one behind: human rights, participation and consideration of vulnerable groups

Twenty NDCs describe segments of their population as vulnerable, most commonly women, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities. Alongside describing the most vulnerable segments of society, many countries include measures to reduce this vulnerability and increase the resilience of vulnerable populations.

All 25 NDCs reference public participation in climate policy and/or action. Most NDCs describe their development process as participatory, although far fewer provide details. The Philippines is the only country to explicitly consider persons of diverse SOGIESC with its whole-of-government-and-society approach to NDC development with meaningful participation of women, children, youth, people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, older persons, local communities, civil societies and faith-based organizations (the Philippines NDC, 2021: p. 1).

Although human rights are mentioned in nine NDCs, most are non-specific, referring to human rights commitments in national institutional policies without specific attention to the integration of human rights principles of participation and information, transparency, accountability, equity and non-discrimination in climate action. Countries should consider adopting a human rights framework and more action-oriented measures to mainstream human rights principles by following the example of the Marshall Islands and supporting human rights experts in advocacy, engagement and capacity-building (the Marshall Islands NDC, 2018: p. 59).

Some countries reference Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE), a term adopted by the UNFCCC to denote work under Article 6 of the Convention and Article 12 of the

Paris Agreement with the overarching goal of empowering all members of society to engage in climate action. Far fewer describe specific programmes under way to increase civil society participation. Many platforms exist that should be used for stakeholder engagement (e.g. youth dialogues, regional workshops and engagement with gender and youth councils) in implementing the NDCs to ensure gender-responsive programming and/or to conduct thematic discussions on SRHR and GBV.

Thirteen NDCs mention participatory strategies in sustainable resource management, of which Nepal demonstrates the importance of monitoring and evaluation. The forestry strategy of Nepal includes a gender component, with an indicator for at least 60 per cent of its forest area to be under community-based management by 2030, with management committees having at least 50 per cent female representation as well as proportional representation of Dalits and Indigenous peoples in key posts (Nepal NDC, 2020: p. 5). When Indigenous peoples and local communities have no or weak legal rights, their forests tend to be vulnerable to deforestation; therefore, ensuring legal forest rights for communities and protection of these is key to lowering emissions and deforestation (Stevens and others, 2014).



RECOMMENDATIONS

General recommendations

Data and evidence

- 1. Strengthen the national-level evidence on the impacts of climate change on SRHR, GBV and harmful practices.** This should include improving data systems to better account and forecast for the differentiated impacts of climate change on SRHR, GBV and harmful practices, including through the conduct of gender-responsive climate vulnerability and risk assessments that integrate SRHR and GBV. Detailed country-level research, preferably led by local researchers, on the intersections between climate, SRHR and GBV is required to better support communities at the local and national level but also to contribute to the global evidence base.
- 2. Scale up efforts to collect and use disaggregated data and account for the differentiated impacts of the climate crisis.** The demonstration of such efforts in the NDCs is encouraging. Gender-disaggregated data supports the identification of groups that are more vulnerable to climate impacts and can help mobilize more sensitive and accurate climate action. This better represents the differentiated impacts of the climate crisis while supporting research, data, planning and intervention to reach better outcomes. This also enables gender-sensitive budgeting, including for components related to SRHR and GBV.

Financing and accountability

- 3. Increase support, funding and evaluation for adaptation and resilience-building efforts, including within NDCs and in the development of climate policies.** While adaptation sections are increasing in frequency and detail within NDCs, greater support, evaluation and financing are required to ensure these policies reflect the needs of underserved populations and topic areas, such as SRHR and GBV.
- 4. Strengthen the integration of costed SRHR and GBV interventions across sectors in climate policy and action.** Include SRHR and GBV issues in domains such as gender and health, as these represent entry points for their inclusion in national climate policies. Costed action, tied to monitoring and indicators that reflect impacts on gender, health, SRHR and GBV requires more financial and technical support. Many existing interventions, particularly related to gender and health, could begin to provide or increase the integration of programming on SRHR and GBV.
- 5. Strengthen health systems' resilience to climate change by ensuring the inclusion of SRHR and GBV.** This includes ensuring the inclusion of SRHR and GBV in vulnerability risk assessments, disaster preparedness plans and health information management systems. Ensure appropriate human resources are available for health, monitoring and evaluation indicators, the allocation of funds and a coordination mechanism.





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Gender equality and representation

6. Scale up and strengthen gender-transformative climate action through the inclusion of SRHR, GBV and harmful practices issues. This includes the appointment and strengthening of the role of a NGCCFP to be placed in the relevant ministry, as recommended by a decision of the 2019 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP25); the review of existing gender-related climate policies; and the integration of gender-transformative approaches in all aspects of climate change policies and programmes/interventions, based on a solid foundation of context-specific analysis.

7. Recognize the impacts of climate change on the drivers of GBV and harmful practices. Support the development of best practices for responding to GBV and harmful practices, and for ensuring the resilience, including financial, of essential services to prevent and respond to GBV. This can be achieved through partnership with gender and rights actors such as organizations

of persons with disabilities, women-led organizations, Indigenous peoples, youth-led organizations and front-line responders.

8. Ensure inclusion and a minimum standard of representation in the development and implementation of climate policy at multiple levels. This includes the inclusion and representation of women, people with diverse SOGIESC, youth, Indigenous peoples, older persons, persons with disabilities and others as relevant.

Human rights and leaving no one behind

9. Improve the understanding of the impacts of climate change on SRHR and GBV for people with diverse and underrepresented SOGIESC. There is insufficient understanding and recognition of the impacts of climate change on people with diverse SOGIESC. Increasing this understanding will require specific, local and sensitive action that is participatory, accountable and calls on existing best practices.



10. Mobilize and support young people.

Support youth climate networks and establish a permanent youth engagement mechanism on climate change at the national level to ensure the mainstreaming of youth priorities across the design and implementation of national climate policy and action.

11. Take an intersectional approach to develop, review and implement climate policy that recognizes the structural drivers of inequality and accounts for multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Climate policy and action must recognize how many of the people who already face barriers to SRHR and GBV services and the realization of their reproductive rights are likely to be disproportionately affected by climate change.

12. Ensure that climate policies are based on human rights and reflect the principles of the ICPD Programme of Action, including protecting the rights of women, children, refugees, displaced persons and persons with disabilities, in climate policy development.

A human rights-based approach that supports individuals to make the reproductive choices that best suit their personal circumstances is core to achieving SRHR. Population dynamics are relevant for climate policy and planning and the NDCs reflect on urbanization, changing population size and structure and the need for population dynamics analysis for forward planning.

Region-specific reflections**13. Enhance recognition of climate change impacts on GBV and harmful practices in NDCs and relevant climate policies.**

National climate policies should more meaningfully account for the delivery of GBV services during climate-related events. This includes strengthening the engagement with national gender/GBV-focused mechanisms (e.g. ministries, parliamentary caucuses, civil society networks) as well as climate-focused national mechanisms to present regional and national analysis of the interlinkages between climate change, GBV and harmful practices and collectively develop a consensus on policy advocacy and programming strategies and interventions. This could be achieved through the creation of a common platform for meaningful dialogue, with key mechanisms, networks and leaders engaged in addressing GBV and climate change.

14. Use adaptation measures for disaster risk reduction as an entry point for SRHR and GBV in climate policies.

Extreme weather events and disasters are discussed in all NDCs, with some noting the role of women in disaster risk reduction. Disaster risk reduction represents a key area to integrate SRHR and GBV. This includes both the immediate needs of access to emergency contraception and saving lives in obstetric complications as well as the need to reduce the vulnerability of existing SRHR health systems to absorb the impacts, respond to and recover from climate shocks. Relevant SRHR and GBV aspects must also be sufficiently integrated within anticipatory action and early warning systems.



15. Consider and include SRHR and GBV in migration and relocation policies. NDCs acknowledge that relocations of populations are already ongoing due to both sudden-onset disasters and slow-onset weather events. However, at present, there is no consideration given to SRHR and GBV. Climate and disaster risk reduction policies should recognize the complex social, economic and financial barriers to SRHR and GBV services that migrants can face and ensure the provision of high-quality services. Furthermore, as migration accentuates the risk of GBV, it is crucial to provide access to services that prevent and respond to GBV among migrants.

16. Use the theme of youth and health to integrate SRHR. The Asia-Pacific region has the highest number of youth references concerning health, which represents an important entry point to strengthening adolescent and youth SRHR.

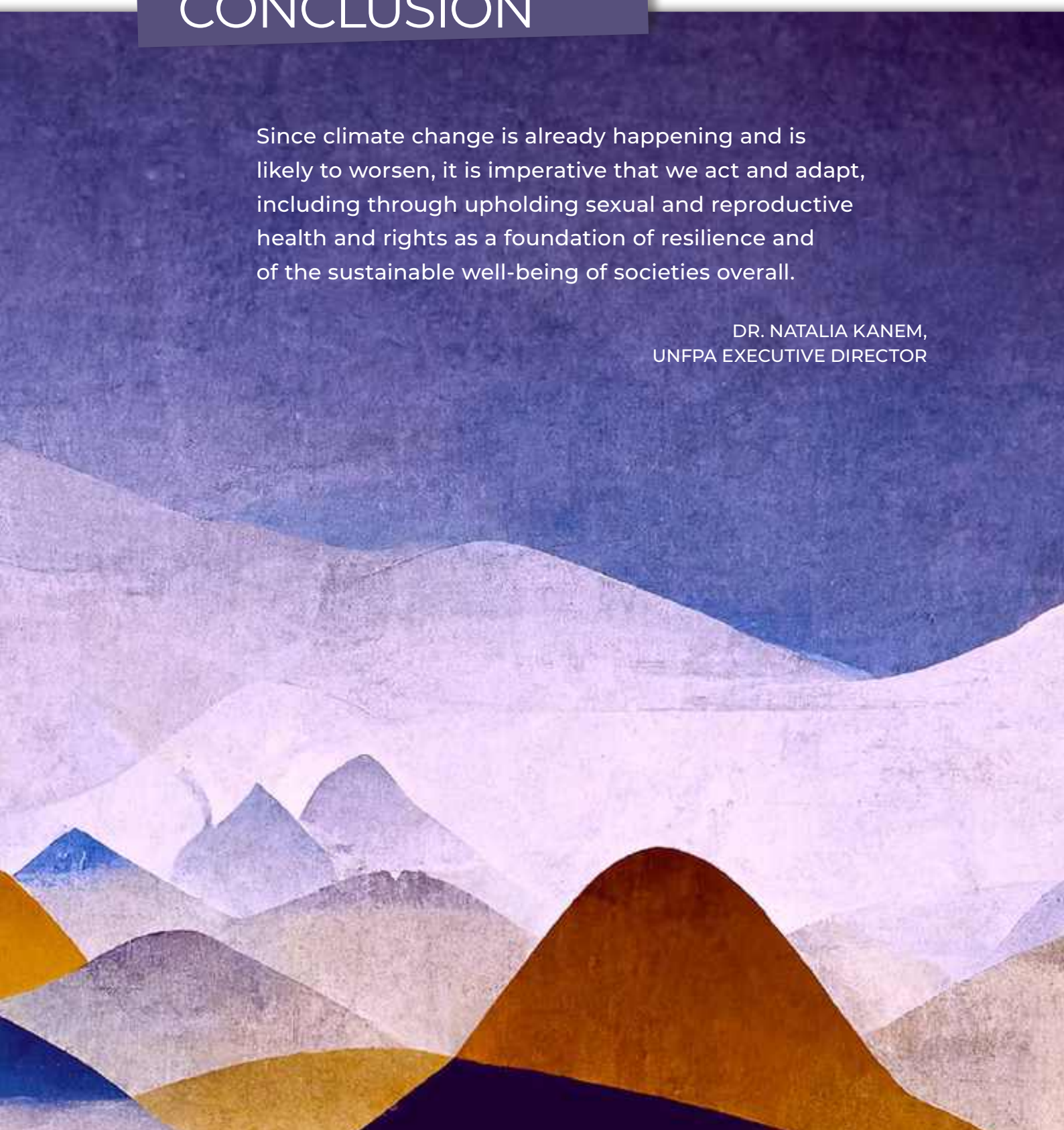
17. Adopt a broader and more meaningful recognition of the impacts of climate change on SRHR, GBV and harmful practices in national climate policies. While there are some references to SRHR and GBV in NDCs from the region, there are few details, few indicators and few costings or mechanisms for tangible implementation and action.



CONCLUSION

Since climate change is already happening and is likely to worsen, it is imperative that we act and adapt, including through upholding sexual and reproductive health and rights as a foundation of resilience and of the sustainable well-being of societies overall.

DR. NATALIA KANEM,
UNFPA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR





This regional review of the integration of SRHR and rights-based approaches in 25 NDCs in the Asia-Pacific region found seven references to SRHR and only three to GBV.

The review found one mention of a harmful practice, that being early marriage. Some countries only refer to aspects of SRHR and GBV in their situational analysis, and others acknowledge the impacts of climate change on SRHR and GBV but without addressing any specific programmatic dimensions. A few others not only acknowledge the impacts of climate change on SRHR and GBV, but also propose substantial and multiple interventions to address these impacts.

This is a call to action for UNFPA and other advocates of SRHR and GBV prevention and response, including policymakers, parliamentarians, researchers and service providers, to enhance their engagement with climate change mechanisms and advocate for a better understanding of the interlinkages between climate action, SRHR and GBV. There are opportunities to ensure more meaningful climate action that addresses vulnerability, inequality and the importance of leaving no one behind. SRHR and interventions to address GBV and harmful practices are cornerstones of resilience and adaptation, and realizing SRHR is an indicator of a healthy and equal society. As the climate crisis intensifies, greater investment, engagement and prioritization of SRHR, GBV and harmful practices are needed to ensure no one is left behind and that inequalities are not further exacerbated.

As the next round of NDC submissions approaches in 2025, there are opportunities for engagement with relevant stakeholders to address the intersection of SRHR and climate change more broadly in national climate policies and, equally,

to address climate change in national SRHR, GBV and harmful practices policies through people-centred, rights-based and gender-transformative approaches. This engagement should go beyond the NDCs to engage national policy-level ecosystems, including national climate policies, as well as GAPs, national adaptation plans (NAPs) and other relevant plans. Civil society and public engagement and consultation should be meaningful and externally assessed to ensure that data and feedback collected during consultations are reflected in NDCs.

Taking action

The results of this report will provide an opening for dialogue at global, regional and national levels on the ways that climate change, SRHR, GBV and harmful practices intersect and to identify entry points for climate action. Highlighting gaps as well as opportunities and promising practices allows for greater and more meaningful integration of aspects of SRHR, GBV and harmful practices in climate policies.





Below are some suggested avenues for further engagement with climate, SRHR, GBV and harmful practices policies in your region or territory:

Create a platform for stakeholder involvement at all levels and work across sectors to ensure the integration of SRHR, GBV and harmful practices in relevant policy and programming.

- Disseminate the findings of this report among relevant stakeholders, including colleagues, ministerial actors, fellow activists and other interested parties in your region. Organize a discussion forum or workshop to facilitate an exchange of ideas and perspectives on the intersections between SRHR, GBV, harmful practices and climate impacts within your local context. This platform will provide an opportunity to explore how these findings align with and enhance the understanding of SRHR, GBV and harmful practices in relation to climate change in your specific region.

Specific ideas to strengthen the discussion include:

- Invite experts, researchers and practitioners working in SRHR, GBV, climate change and environmental justice to share their insights and experiences.
- Encourage participants to share local case studies, success stories, challenges and innovative approaches to addressing SRHR, GBV and harmful practices in the context of climate change.
- Facilitate group discussions and brainstorming sessions to identify key priorities, gaps and potential strategies for integrating SRHR, GBV and harmful practices into climate policy and action.
- Conduct a comprehensive mapping of climate policies in your country, going beyond the NDCs. Explore and identify other relevant climate policies, such as GAPs,

NAPs or any other national policies that provide opportunities for the inclusion of SRHR, GBV and harmful practices.

Specific ideas to strengthen the mapping process include:

- Collaborate with local research institutions, civil society organizations and relevant government agencies to gather information and analyse the existing climate policies.
- Examine the extent to which these policies address issues of SRHR, GBV and harmful practices and identify potential entry points for integration.
- Highlight good practices and successful initiatives within climate policies that address SRHR, GBV and harmful practices and showcase them as examples to inspire further action.
- Actively engage in national consultations on climate policy, including the updating of NDCs and the development of NAPs and GAPs. Stay informed about the processes and timelines related to these consultations, and proactively seek opportunities to participate and contribute your insights and perspectives.

Specific ideas to strengthen your engagement include:

- Reach out to relevant government agencies, United Nations entities and civil society organizations involved in the climate policy development process, expressing your interest in participating and contributing.
- Prepare position papers or policy briefs highlighting the importance of integrating SRHR, GBV and harmful practices into climate policy and action, and share them with key stakeholders.



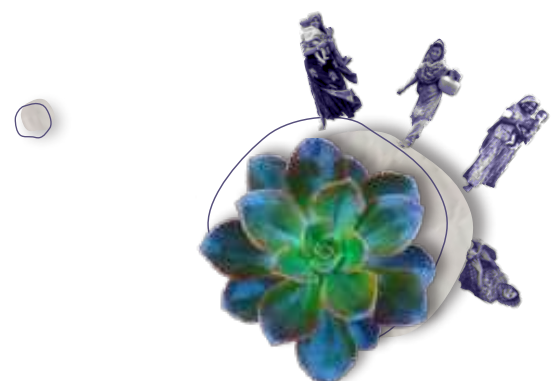
- Advocate for the inclusion of SRHR, GBV and harmful practices in the discussions, emphasizing their critical role in addressing the climate crisis and ensuring the well-being and rights of all individuals, particularly those most vulnerable to climate impacts.
- Collaborate with like-minded organizations and activists to amplify your collective voice and advocate for meaningful inclusion and action on SRHR, GBV and harmful practices in climate policy at the national level.

Contribute to the national dialogue and strengthen NAPs and specific interventions to include delivery of SRHR and GBV services for women and girls as well as prevention of harmful practices.

- Learn about the NDC and NAP development or update process in your country or region:
 - Research and gather information about the specific steps and timeline involved in the development or updating of NDCs and NAPs in your country or region.
 - Identify the key government agencies or bodies responsible for coordinating these processes and reach out to them to request information or guidance on how to engage effectively.
 - Attend workshops, webinars or information sessions organized by government agencies or climate-related organizations to learn about the requirements and expectations for engaging in the NDC and NAP development or update process.
 - Connect with local civil society organizations, research institutions or advocacy groups that have experience or knowledge about the NDC and NAP processes to gain insights and guidance.

- Advocate for the meaningful inclusion and engagement of stakeholders:
 - Advocate for the meaningful inclusion and active engagement of a diverse range of stakeholders in the development and implementation of NDCs and NAPs. This includes local groups, young people, women's groups, Indigenous peoples, underrepresented groups and other relevant stakeholders.
 - Engage with decision makers, government officials and relevant institutions through letters, petitions or direct meetings to emphasize the importance of inclusive and participatory processes.
 - Collaborate with local organizations and networks that represent the interests of marginalized or underrepresented groups to amplify their voices and advocate for their meaningful inclusion.
 - Highlight the benefits of diverse perspectives and experiences in crafting climate policies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by different groups.
 - Provide concrete suggestions and recommendations for ensuring inclusive engagement, such as organizing targeted consultations, creating dedicated spaces for marginalized groups to voice their concerns and establishing mechanisms for ongoing dialogue and feedback.

By actively engaging in the NDC and NAP processes and demanding inclusive participation, you can contribute to the development of more comprehensive and equitable climate policies that reflect the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders.



Strengthen the evidence base for the interlinkages between climate change and SRHR, GBV and harmful practices in your country and region.

- Gather information in your country, region or territory:
 - Conduct research and gather information on the intersections between SRHR, GBV, harmful practices and climate impacts in your specific context. Look for existing studies, reports or data that highlight these connections and provide insights into the challenges and opportunities for addressing them.
 - Engage with local research institutions, universities or non-governmental organizations working on climate change, SRHR, GBV and harmful practices to explore possibilities for collaboration and knowledge sharing.
 - Participate in relevant meetings, workshops or conferences that focus on climate change, SRHR, GBV or harmful practices to learn from experts and practitioners in the field and gather valuable information.
 - Incorporate SRHR, GBV and harmful practices as areas of interest:
 - Advocate for the inclusion of SRHR, GBV and harmful practices as specific areas of interest in relevant research undertakings, meetings, data-gathering activities and programmes. Emphasize the need to understand and address the intersections between these issues and climate impacts.
 - Collaborate with researchers, organizations or institutions working on climate change to explore opportunities for joint research or data-collection initiatives that incorporate SRHR, GBV and harmful practices as key components.
 - Engage with local or regional climate change platforms, working groups or task forces to raise awareness about the importance of addressing SRHR, GBV and harmful practices and advocate for their inclusion in discussions and decision-making processes.
 - Raise questions and ensure accountability:
 - Participate actively in relevant forums, such as policy dialogues, conferences or community meetings, where climate change and related issues are discussed. Raise questions and highlight the intersections between SRHR, GBV, harmful practices and climate change.
 - Engage with duty bearers, policymakers and government representatives at the national and regional levels to hold them accountable for considering the intersection of these issues in their work.
 - Request transparency and accountability in national and regional climate change strategies, policies and programmes, urging decision makers to integrate considerations of SRHR, GBV and harmful practices into their approaches.
 - Collaborate with local and regional advocacy groups, women's rights organizations, youth networks and other relevant stakeholders to amplify your voices and jointly advocate for the recognition and inclusion of these intersections in climate change policies and actions.
- By gathering information, incorporating these issues in relevant activities and demanding accountability, you can contribute to raising awareness and promoting the integration of SRHR, GBV and harmful practices considerations in climate change agendas in your country or region.



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Appendices

Appendix 1: Selection of Nationally Determined Contributions in Asia and the Pacific for review

Country included	Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) reviewed	Submission date	Original language
Bangladesh	Updated NDC	26 August 2021	English
Bhutan	Second NDC	24 June 2021	English
Cambodia	Updated NDC	21 December 2020	English
China	Updated NDC	28 October 2021	English/Chinese
Fiji	Updated NDC	31 December 2020	English
Indonesia	Updated NDC	22 July 2021	English
Japan	Updated NDC	22 October 2021	English
Lao People's Democratic Republic (the)	Updated NDC	11 May 2021	English
Malaysia	Updated NDC	30 July 2021	English
Maldives	Updated NDC	28 December 2020	English
Marshall Islands (the)	Updated Second NDC and Second NDC	31 December 2020 and 22 November 2018	English
Mongolia	Updated NDC	13 October 2020	English
Myanmar	Updated NDC	3 August 2021	English
Nauru	Updated NDC	14 October 2021	English
Nepal	Second NDC	8 December 2020	English
Pakistan	Updated NDC	21 October 2021	English
Papua New Guinea	Second NDC	16 December 2020	English
Philippines (the)	First NDC	15 April 2021	English
Samoa	Second NDC	30 July 2021	English
Solomon Islands	Updated NDC	19 July 2021	English
Sri Lanka	Updated NDC	24 September 2021	English
Thailand	Updated NDC	26 October 2020	English
Tonga	Second NDC	12 September 2020	English
Vanuatu	Updated NDC	22 March 2021	English
Viet Nam	Updated NDC	11 September 2020	English



Country not included	Reason for exclusion
Afghanistan	Submitted first Nationally Determined Contribution before 2020 (23 November 2016) and no update submitted
Cook Islands (the)	Submitted first Nationally Determined Contribution before 2020 (9 January 2016) and no update submitted
Democratic People's Republic of Korea (the)	Submitted updated first Nationally Determined Contribution before 2020 (19 September 2019)
India	Submitted update 26 August 2022 after analysis was completed
Kiribati	Submitted first Nationally Determined Contribution before 2020 (21 September 2016) and no update submitted
Islamic Republic of Iran (the)	No Nationally Determined Contribution submitted
Federated States of Micronesia (the)	Submitted first Nationally Determined Contribution before 2020 (15 September 2016) and no update submitted
Niue	Submitted first Nationally Determined Contribution before 2020 (28 October 2016) and no update submitted
Palau	Submitted first Nationally Determined Contribution before 2020 (22 April 2016) and no update submitted
Timor-Leste	Submitted first Nationally Determined Contribution before 2020 (16 August 2017) and no update submitted
Tuvalu	Submitted first Nationally Determined Contribution before 2020 (22 April 2016) and no update submitted

Appendix 2: Summary tables

Table 1: Sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence and harmful practices references across Asia and the Pacific Nationally Determined Contributions

Region (number of Nationally Determined Contributions)	Maternal and newborn health	Family planning and contraception	Abortion and post-abortion care	Menstruation and menstrual hygiene	Gender-based violence	Adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights	Early, forced child marriage	HIV and AIDS and sexually transmitted infections	Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics	Sexual and reproductive health and rights information and awareness	Other
Asia and the Pacific (25)	7	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	2	0

Table 2: Human rights, participation and vulnerable groups references across Asia and the Pacific Nationally Determined Contributions

Region (number of Nationally Determined Contributions)	Vulnerable groups				Participation of population in:			Human rights
	As main pillar/strategy	Communities dependent on natural resources	In relation to health	In relation to gender	Nationally Determined Contributions development	Local resource management	In relation to gender	
Asia and the Pacific (25)	20	13	16	13	25	18	13	9

Table 3: Population dynamics, human mobility and urbanization references across Asia and the Pacific Nationally Determined Contributions

Region (number of Nationally Determined Contributions)	Any reference to population dynamics	Migration, urbanization, human mobility
Asia and the Pacific (25)	19	10

Table 4: Youth references across Asia and the Pacific Nationally Determined Contributions

Region (number of Nationally Determined Contributions)	As vulnerable group	Participation	In relation to health	In relation to education/awareness	Consideration of future generations
Asia and the Pacific (25)	13	8	14	10	9

Table 5: Gender references across Asia and the Pacific Nationally Determined Contributions

Region (number of Nationally Determined Contributions)	Mainstreaming	Vulnerability	Rights	Participation	Empowerment	Health	Energy	Agriculture	Water/food security
Asia and the Pacific (25)	17	13	9	13	8	13	5	11	6

Table 6: Health references across Asia and the Pacific Nationally Determined Contributions

Region (number of Nationally Determined Contributions)	Mortality	Diseases	Air pollution	Waste	Surveillance	Access service/supplies	Food	Water	Research	Information/campaigns	COVID-19	Disasters	Budget line
Asia and the Pacific (25)	8	22	12	22	16	6	21	20	7	3	18	25	6



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